CHAPTER 40

THE RECEPTION OF PLAUTUS IN ANTIQUITY

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1. Phase Ia: Reperformance

The earliest, as well as probably the liveliest and most creative, phase of the reception of Plautus in antiquity must have started immediately after the playwright's lifetime, if not even earlier.[1] The first hint of an active reception of Plautus through performance was long recognized (Ritschl 1845: 180–238) in the initial lines of *Casina*, where the prologue speaker addresses the young members of the audience, who never had an opportunity to enjoy this play:

> nos postquam populi rumore intelleximus studiose expetere uos Plautinas fabulas,
> antiquam eius edimus comoediam, quam uos probastis qui estis in senioribus:
> nam iuniorum qui sunt, non norunt, scio.
>
> Since the rumor has reached us that you long to see Plautus's plays, we are putting onstage one of his old comedies: it was well received by you, I mean you older folks—for I know the younger ones among you are not acquainted with it.

Here the words *antiquam eius…comoediam* and *non norunt* suggest that these lines were pronounced long after the play's first production, and that Plautus was no longer directly involved as a producer or actor. Although we are in no position to reconstruct the way in which these repeat performances shaped the reception of Plautus at the level of stage action and setting, or of actors' interpretation (we have basically no clear idea of these features even for Plautus), we know with some certainty that these shows provided occasions for some extensive reworking of the plays. Plautus's scripts had not yet

[1] Very important discussion of the problem in Deufert 2002: 29–43, who however champions the mid-second century BCE as the period in which Plautus's plays underwent extensive revision.

attained the status of unmodifiable classics, and it was easy for them to undergo revisions, sometimes simply to fit a director's taste, others to match the size and expertise of the company putting up the play (see below). Indeed, intellectual property was feebly protected in Rome at this time, especially in the case of dramatic scripts: comedies were not published as books but passed on in the form of stage scripts from one stage director to the next. Plautus himself was thought by later critics to have put on stage earlier dramatists' plays after giving them a veneer of his own style (Gellius *N.A.* 3.3.13), and it is likely that he did the same to his own plays when they were reperformed after the premiere.

Unfortunately, only rarely can we isolate the authentic from the "revamped" or reperformed Plautus ("Revival" text was the definition of the great Plautus scholar W. M. Lindsay in Lindsay 1904) and use the latter in a literary-historical perspective. Were it not so, we could add to our history of the Latin theater a substantial new chapter, much more consistent than the entire body of fragments of Roman comedy collected in Ribbeck 1898.[2] What has come down as "Plautus" derives from ancient editions—the earliest presumably from the end of the second century BCE—in which critics collected and, in the course of time, merged, even competing versions of the same scene, or of single lines inside the same scene (Deufert 2002: 54–62). Unfortunately, whatever marks these ancient critics placed in the margins by way of signposting suspected interpolation all but disappeared in transmission.

Sometimes the modernization of language or metrics clearly was the motive for a later adapter's rewriting (the humor of a joke is lost on an audience that has difficulty in understanding the grammar of a phrase),[3] but many short interpolations may just as well be unintentional copying errors, or corrections introduced by later scholars who did not understand early Latin phraseology or meter. It is mostly from some suspected longer sections that we seem to glean interesting clues to the history of Plautus' *Nachleben*.[4]

[2] In recent years, the debate about later interpolations came into renewed prominence in a series of books by the German scholar Otto Zwierlein, who devised criteria for distinguishing authentic from spurious and later passages and advanced the thesis that most such interpolations stemmed from the hand of a single writer who was active after Terence and knew the *Togata* (Zwierlein 1991a: 228–235). Even if some of Zwierlein's analysis is very acute, his conclusions have not gained much consensus, both in the matter of detailed analysis, with too much emphasis on repetition and rational organization of thought and plot linearity as authenticity blueprints—always weak assumptions in comedy—as well as his proposal to date the doublets in the post-Terentian period.

[3] The two most typical examples for each category, obsolete language or obsolete metrics, are *Pseudolus* 523–523a, *studeo hercle audire, nam ted ausculto lubens. / [agedum nam satis libenter te ausculto loqui]* and *Trinummus* 788–788a, *sed epistulas quando opsignatas adferet / [sed opsignatas quando attulerit epistulas]*.

[4] The search for interpolated sections was a constant concern of German nineteenth-century scholarship, which deployed great acumen and energy in this area (see for example Langen 1886: 233–387, Thierfelder 1929, and, more recently, Zwierlein 1990, Zwierlein 1991a, Zwierlein 1991b, and Zwierlein 1992). By contrast, the most recent series of editions of single plays of Plautus, the important Urbino-Sarsina series, shows much greater restraint. If we compare the list of suspect passages in Lindsay 1904: 43–45 with the practice of, e.g., Danese 2004, we see that most athetized passages have disappeared from the text.

For example, in his edition of *Poenulus* (Leo 1896: 240) the German scholar Friedrich Leo, athetized 1372–1397. In his view they were written to replace 1315–1354, "by someone, as it seems, who wanted to increase the role of the *leno*"—a ribald character's role, but one which, to judge from the great actor Quintus Roscius's preference for Ballio part in Cicero's day (*Pro Q. Roscio comoedo* 20), was not unsympathetic to audiences and attracted good performers. Indeed, the entire very long ending of *Poenulus* reveals more than one loose joint between scenes written by different hands, for example when similar punch lines occur in succession or when entrance and contact announcements for the same character are inconsistent (the *leno*, for example, appears to enter the stage three times without ever exiting it, at 1342, 1387, and 1398).

In *Cistellaria* 671–748, the "Casket comedy," the maid Halisca is desperate because she has lost the "casket" containing small toys and other tokens needed to prove the status of the young *meretrix* Selenium. While Halisca frets onstage (singing a lively aria), even asking the audience if they have seen the casket, Lampadio, an old servant, and his mistress Phanostrata appear. Phanostrata has recognized in the casket the tokens of her own long lost daughter, and for this reason the two decide to listen aside. When they finally approach Halisca, the maid speaks so uninhibitedly of what is supposed to be a confidential family matter that she seems to be speaking to herself, or to address the audience once more. Then, at ll. 723–740, Halisca imparts again the same information, this time more reticently, with half-answers: she is looking for "signs" (*uestigium*) of something which "fled" somewhere, and gave the family "affliction"—a stalling tactic that irritates Lampadio. Only after some further comic banter with Lampadio does Halisca come to the point. Here the feeling of having a duplicate scene is impossible to overcome, and Thierfelder 1929: 120 persuasively suggested that the iambic septenarii at 708–718 were a later substitute for Halisca's song at 671–707. The reason for the substitution may have been that Halisca's role was not important enough for the ambitious aria (Goldberg 2004: 390–392), or simply that the actor impersonating this character (even allowing for role doubling, which we think was the rule) lacked the requisite expertise in singing.

2. Phase Ib: The Comic Tradition

Closest in time, if not contemporary, to the elusive reperformances of Plautus comes the activity of the lesser-known authors of *comoedia palliata,* through and beyond Terence, and of the other comic subgenres. The latter are mainly *togata,* set in Rome or its whereabouts, and *Atellana*, distinguished by the use of fixed stock types and possibly by looser language and obscenity. However, study of these fragments in an intertextual, reception-focused perspective is hampered by the limited amount of extant material available for comparison. Fragments of Roman comedy outside Plautus and Terence are numerous but very short, and selected by their transmitting sources for their verbal rarities, which tends to distort our image of this tradition (see *de Melo, this volume). Finally, even if a great deal of linguistic parallels between Plautus and the other comic

authors is in evidence, *comici minores* were also probably drawing on a common tradition of comic verse writing, with a shared repertoire of near-formulaic verse forms, verbal jokes, and metaphors (Wright 1974). Hence it is never quite clear when we are dealing with a "reception" of Plautus in the strict sense. For example, it is difficult to decide whether the line end at Turpilius (who died in 103 BCE, according to Jerome's *Chronicon*) 101 R.[3] *ut fastidit carnufex*, "look at the rascal, how he scorns us" is influenced by Plautus *Mostellaria* 886 *ut fastidit simia* "look at the ape, how he scorns us." The same may also be true of Afranius (active ca. 150 BCE) 330–331 R.[3] *quis hic est Simia / qui me hodie ludificatus est*, "who is this Simia who's made a laughing stock of me today?" and Plautus *Pseudolus* 1017–1018 *peiorem . . . nunquam . . . uidi quam hic est Simia/* "I never saw a worse man than this Simia," though it is tempting to see a close parallel between what must have been a clever slave figure and the impertinent Simia who helps Pseudolus to cheat Ballio with an able disguise plot. Terence too seems to share formulaic expressions with Plautus; Terence, *Phormio* 166: *iam depecisci morte cupio: tu conicito cetera* ("I'm keen to settle for death in return, you can work out the rest") is almost identical to Plautus, *Casina* 93–94: *etiam in crucem / sequi decretumst: dehinc conicito ceterum* ("I'm determined to cling to you even on the scaffold—you can work out the rest from this"). In this case (*hinc*) *conicito cetera (-um*) seems a common conversational move in lively dialogue, and also prosodically convenient as a line end in iambic verse.

Even with these cautionary remarks, close linguistic analysis of the fragments suggests that the other comedians were closer to Plautus's verbal exuberance than to Terence's restraint and naturalism (see *Karakasis, this volume), though on such tattered evidence the swing of individual variation between these two extremes is bound to be invisible to us.

A close relationship seems to exist between Plautus, *Asinaria* 307–308: *uerbis uelitationem fieri compendi uolo:/quid istuc est negoti?* "let us make an end to all this cut-and-thrust—what's the matter?" and Turpilius 145 R.[3]: *comperce uerbis uelitare: ad rem redi* "stop this guerrilla of words—come to the point," not only because of the metaphorical use of *uelitare*, literally "to attack with the light-armed infantry," but also because the expression is used in both passages to end a comic exchange and move on with the action (*quid istuc . . . negoti?/ ad rem redi*). Another passage possibly under direct influence from Plautus is Turpilius 132 R.[3]: *inuitauit uini poculis plusculum hic se in prandio* "this guy has indulged himself a little more over lunch with his wine." It seems to draw on Plautus, *Amphitruo* 282–283: *credo edepol equidem dormire Solem, atque adpotum probe: / mira sunt nisi inuitauit sese in cena plusculum* "I really think the sun is asleep, and full of wine to the brim: he really must have indulged himself a bit last night over dinner." The exhilarating scene in *Mostellaria* 157–312, in which the old servant Scapha advises the naive young courtesan Philematium on how to make the best of his young lover's affection, may have had an impact on two later authors. The joke in *Mostellaria* 268: *ut speculum tenuisti, metuo ne oleant argentum manus* "since you held the mirror, I am worried that your hand may smell of silver" is similar to that in Pomponius ("well known" as a poet in 89 BCE, according to Jerome), 6 R.[3] (from *Aleones,* "The gamesters"): *aleo non ludam sane, ne meae male olant manus* "I don't want to play

with garlic, because I am worried that my hands may smell badly." (This is presumably said by a rustic who confuses the words *alium* "garlic" and *aleo* "gambler," which may separately suggest Plautine influence[5].) Likewise, Plautus, *Mostellaria* 261: *tum tu igitur cedo purpurissum* "then give me the purple makeup" resembles Afranius 231 R.[3] (from *Omen,* "The sign"): *cedo purpurissum*, "give me the purple makeup."

Ancient critics themselves sometimes provide other comparisons and parallels. To the otherwise almost unknown comedian Aquilius were ascribed nine lines from a play titled *Boeotia* in which a parasite complains against the inventors of sundials, presumably because he has to wait till midday before he can turn up at his patrons' doors. According to Gellius, who transmits the lines (*Noctes Atticae* 3.3.3), the parasite's tirade is stylistically so Plautine that the fragment would provide a very telling example of the reception of Plautus—except that beginning with Varro *apud* Gellius, many have thought the play was actually by Plautus. (Indeed, the lines are normally ascribed to Plautus in many modern editions (cf. Monda 2004: 61).) Gellius again, in 13.23.11 and 16, quotes in close proximity Plautus, *Truculentus* 515: *Mars peregre adueniens salutat Nerienem uxorem suam* ("The home-coming Mars greets his wife Nerio") and the similar greeting formula in the obscure comic poet Licinius Imbrex, *nolo ego Neaeram te uocent, set Nerienem, /cum quidem Mauorti es in conubium data* ("let your name be not Neaera, but Nerio, since you were given as wife to Mars"). The similarity of situation, a boastful mercenary saluting his mistress with ridiculous pomp, and the recherché mythological imagery, suggests that Imbrex echoed Plautus's passage.

insert comma after "that,"

Less can be said at the level of plot structure or invention and characterization. It is extremely difficult to establish whether the rest of the comic tradition was oriented more closely toward Plautus's metatheatrical and verbally exuberance and thematic preference for plot types centered on deception, or toward Terence's greater naturalism in language and predilection for romantic plot types.

Titinius, a younger contemporary of Plautus, represented the (presumably) joking banter of fellow slaves in fr. 131 R: *lassitudo conseruum, reduuiae flagri* (spoken verse, probably iambics), "you sweating ground of fellow slaves, you residue of the whip," which has parallels in the abusive exchange between Libanus and Leonida in Plautus, *Asinaria* 297–298: *gymnasium flagri, salveto.* :: *quid agis, custos carceris?* :: *o catenarum colone.* :: *o uirgarum lascivia*, "hail to you, sporting ground of the whip! :: How are things, guard of the gaol? :: / Hail to you, tenant of the fetters. :: Hail to you, delight of the rod!," and in the greeting that the *leno* Dordalus offers the slave Toxilus in *Persa* 419–420: *scortorum liberator, suduculum flagri, compedium tritor, pistrinorum ciuitas*, "You freer of whores, you wearer-out of whips and fetters, you citizen of the mill" (tr. Bovie).

With a poetic program at the other end of the comic spectrum, Terence certainly knew Plautus's scripts, and probably even studied them in a company's or magistrate's

[5] To make the intertextual network even more tight-fitting, the same wordplay, and caricature of substandard rustic pronunciation, has been shown to occur in Plautus, *Mostellaria* 47: *sine me aleato fungi fortunas meas*: cf. Fontaine 2010: 52.

archives (Deufert 2002: 27).[6] In the prologue of *Eunuchus,* Terence admits having gone back to a Plautine script when an antagonist accused him of plagiarism: "He said that there was a play called *The Toady* [*Kolax*] by Naevius and Plautus, an old play, and that the characters of the parasite and the soldier had been lifted from it" (tr. P. Brown).

Plautus's *Colax* has not survived, so the truth of the charge cannot be checked, but critics ancient and modern have often remarked on the presence of "Plautine" features in *Eunuchus*, sometimes seen as a concession to the "unsophisticated" taste (true or supposed) of Roman popular audiences. Influence from Plautus is seen especially in the more conspicuous adoption of expressions of abuse and of inorganic speeches holding up the plot (Karakasis 2005: 121–123), particularly in the scenes in which the soldier and the parasite appear, where even Donatus, Terence's fourth-century commentator, mentions Plautus as a parallel for the characterization of Thraso the soldier (*Comm. in Ter. Eun.* 432—in Donatus's view, both Thraso and Plautus's soldier, Pyrgopolynices, express themselves in incorrect Latin as a mark of their stupidity). One example of a Plautine feature in *Eunuchus* occurs at 256–257: *concurrunt mi obuiam cuppedinarii omnes,/ cetarii, lanii, coqui, fartores, piscatores* "up there rushed, glad to meet me, all the sellers of fancy foods, the tunny-sellers, butchers, cooks, poulterers, and fishmongers" (tr. Brown), where Gnatho, the cunning parasite, is met by a colorful crowd of Roman market traders—his purveyors when he is in luck. This Roman intrusion is uncharacteristic for Terence, who aims at recreating a consistent, self-contained dramatic illusion (all his plays are set in Greece), so in this case he seems to have been inspired by Plautus, where such Roman vignettes are abundant: compare the satire of the traders coming to the house of the rich lady in *Aulularia* 508–513: *stat fullo, phyrgio, aurifex, lanarius;/ caupones patagiarii, indusiarii, flammarii, violarii, carinarii; stant manulearii, stant murobatharii, propolae linteones, calceolarii; sedentarii sutores diabathrarii* "here come the cloth-fuller, the embroiderer, the goldsmith, the wool-weaver, the designers of fringes, makers of underwear, inventors of veils, dyers in purple and saffron, sleeve-stitchers, linen-weavers, perfumiers, shoe-makers and slipper-makers, sandal-fitters, and leather-stainers" (tr. Watling). In fact, the enumeration in Plautus is much longer, with a clear relish for the heaping up of more and more names effectively conjuring up the rich woman's world; Terence shows greater restraint and, typically for his linguistic purism, shuns traders' names of Greek etymology.

insert comma after "caupones,"

Later in the play, an interesting comment on the Plautine character of *Eunuchus* comes from Donatus's commentary.

[6] No explicit information about the availability of previous comic writers' scripts is extant prior to the learned activities of second and first century scholars such as Accius, Stilo, and Varro, which in itself shows that Plautus at least was entering a literary canon designed to compete with those of the Greeks. However, the close verbal echoes illustrated here and elsewhere (see Fontaine on Terence in this volume) suggest perusal of scripts, not merely some aural acquaintance with a performance; perhaps more decisively, Terence himself hints at a careful analysis of a number of written dramatic texts in his famous defense against the charge of plagiarism (*furtum*) in *Eunuchus* 19–33.

> Don. *Comm. in Ter. Eun.* 694 AGEDVM HOC MIHI haec Plautina sunt, cum in iisdem longa sit disputatio; sed mire a Terentio proferuntur ad eius exemplum et, quod est plus, carent Plautinis nugis.
> PAY ATTENTION, THEN—all of this is in the Plautine manner, because there is a long altercation about the same topic. At the same time, Terence ~~oddly~~ sets the scene in Plautine manner and, what is odder, without any of Plautus's idle jesting.

Would it be possible to alter "oddly" to "aptly" or "ably", and, line below, "odder" to "more"? I think the meaning is that Terence is "doing Plautus without his more objectionable features". But other let's just leave it, and sorry for this oversight.

Donatus's note was probably in origin a comment on the entire scene in which young Phaedria grills the unhappy eunuch Dorus for allegedly raping the girl in his care. Since Phaedria refuses to believe his own brother is the real culprit, Dorus gets some heavy shaking, and Donatus must have felt that the questioning of the eunuch was too long-winded and repetitive and held up the action (*in iisdem . . . longa disputatio*). At the same time, Terence "adapts his model oddly" (*mire . . . ad eius exemplum,* which is, incidentally, a unique admission of influence from a Latin comic model in Terence), with no recourse to *nugae.* Donatus does not explain what in his view counts as Plautine *nugae*, but the word conjures up the emphasis on *ioci*, "verbal humor," as the main qualifying feature of Plautus in other critics (e.g., in Gellius, *Noctes Atticae*,3.3.3; Macrob. *Saturn.* 2.1.11). Wessner 1902: 418 suggested that Donatus had in mind Plautus *Menaechmi* 601–662, where Menaechmus tries in vain to pacify his wife for having stolen one of her dresses (a *palla* he has brought to his mistress) in a long-drawn-out series of evasions and denials which at some point the wife qualifies, in five successive lines, with *nugas agis* "all avails nothing." The passage in Donatus is doubly relevant both for the admission of Plautus as a model for Terence and for the hint of the dominant critical idea about Plautus, namely the preponderance of the comic, purely linguistic element over plausibility of action and characterization.

In 160 BCE, one year after staging *Eunuchus,* Terence wrote *Adelphoe,* where study and imitation of Plautus seems quite prominent. Plautus is mentioned in the prologue (22–24), and several echoes are in evidence, especially of *Miles Gloriosus*.

Old Micio in his initial monologue gives voice to his worries because his adopted son has not yet returned from a nocturnal escapade, and he starts to fear that his tolerant approach to education has not been well thought out (34–38): *ego quia non rediit filius quae cogito et / quibus nunc sollicitor rebus! ne aut ille alserit / aut uspiam ceciderit aut praefregerit / aliquid*. "But look what I'm suspecting and worrying about now because my son hasn't returned! I'm afraid he may have caught a chill, or fallen over somewhere, or broken something" (tr. Brown; on Micio's monologue, see *Dunsch on prologues, this volume). Micio's lament seems inspired by the long tirade of old Periplecomenus in *Miles Gloriosus*, another satiric passage expatiating on the advantages of remaining a childless bachelor (*Miles Gloriosus* 718–722): *Pol si habuissem, satis cepissem miseriarum e liberis: / continuo excruciarer animi: si ei forte fuisset febris, / censerem emori; cecidissetve ebrius aut de equo uspiam, / metuerem ne ibi diffregisset crura aut cervices sibi*, "children, if I had any, would have brought me a peck of trouble. I should never have had a moment's peace. If a child were ill, I should have thought he was dying; if my son fell off his horse, or fell down drunk in the street, I'd be afraid he'd broken his leg or his neck." (tr. Watling). Although the ethos of the words is different (Terence's father

is deeply concerned, Periplecomenus speaks of a danger he has shunned), the borrowing is certain, especially in the description of the possible mishaps (catching cold, a fall from a horse, a bone fracture, *cecidisset… uspiam, metuerem ne ibi diffregisset…* and *ne… uspiam ceciderit aut praefregerit aliquid*), and reveals the extent of Terence's study of Plautus. At the same time, the lack of specific details in Terence shows his greater concern for characterization (Micio speaking of his own son refrains from imagining grisly details), while at the same time highlighting Plautus's taste for comic schadenfreude.

In *Adelphoe* 785–786, the frightened slave Syrus goes into hiding to escape from Demea, the strict father who has just caught his own son holding a courtesan in his brother's house: *nisi, dum haec silescunt turbae, interea in angulum / aliquo abeam atque edormiscam hoc villi: sic agam* "All I can think of is to go off into a corner somewhere while this rumpus quietens down and sleep off my little drop of wine: that's what I'll do" (tr. Brown). The words Syrus pronounces while exiting the stage recall closely a passage in Plautus, *Miles Gloriosus* 582–583: *nam iam aliquo aufugiam et me occultabo aliquot dies, / dum haec consilescunt turbae atque irae leniunt*, "I'll do a bunk and lie doggo for a day or two, until tempers have cooled and all this commotion died down" (tr. Watling). In Plautus, the speaker is Sceledrus, also a slave, who has been convinced that the woman he has seen in the arms of another is not Philocomasium, his master's mistress, and now fears punishment for his rash accusations. The parallel is verbally close, especially *dum haec (con)silescunt turbae,* although its intertextual relevance has never been explained. Whereas Sceledrus all but disappears from the rest of *Miles Gloriosus* (evidently because the actor impersonating him was later engaged in a different role), it is possible that Terence, by reusing the Plautine exit cue with a more plausible motivation in naturalistic terms (dozing away the wine drunk during the incriminated party), is casting some retrospective criticism over Plautus's more cavalier treatment of plot consistency and dramatic unity.[7]

3. Phase II: Late Republic and Early Imperial Period: Swing Phase

By the end of the second century BCE, Plautus's plays began to be canonized. Grammatical writers had become interested in his work and had collected the plays in an edition, circulating in rolls (*uolumina*) that contained one or more plays (Deufert 2002: 44–62). The availability of an extensive Plautine corpus in turn triggered scholarly engagement with text and interpretation as well as critical debate at a literary-historical level. Traces of these early debates are visible in the work of later scholars (Varro,

[7] For an innovative discussion of intertextual phenomena in *comoedia palliata*, notably between Plautus and Terence, cf. Fontaine 2014.

Gellius). Performances, too, certainly continued at least to the age of Cicero or a bit later, but little can be made of them in terms of reception. More generally, theatrical shows became more and more detached from what upper-class intellectuals regarded as "literature," for which crowded theaters were in their view an unsuitable venue.

Lucilius is the earliest author outside the comic tradition to have used this new Plautus in book form as a literary model. Indeed, among the literary genres of the later period it is satire that inherits many of the qualifying features of comedy, such as verbal humor and aggression, caricature, lively dialogue, and the use of colorful language, even mixtures of Latin and Greek. Unfortunately, owing to the fragmentary state of his *Satires*, Lucilius's debt to Plautus is not easy to evaluate. Nevertheless, at least fr. 736 Marx (from a satire recommending venal love) is worth mentioning, because it is an exact quotation of Plautus *Mercator* 396, *lignum caedat pensum faciat aedis uerrat uapulet* (describing the duties of a decent maidservant), "she must know how to cut wood, weave, mop the floor . . . take a beating."

Among Republican scholars interested in Plautus, M. Terentius Varro stands out. He fostered the critical appreciation of the playwright. He discussed issues of authenticity, exegesis, and literary history, and he recreated some of Plautus's spirit in his *Menippean Satires*.

Varro's *Menippean Satires* are a literary hybrid of prose and verse in various meters, including dramatic. They were probably narratives with much dialogue, perhaps sometimes even fully dialogic, in the manner of Horace's *Sermones.* We do not know if Varro had a marked preference for Plautus over all other comic writers. However, in the *Menippeans,* his debt to Plautus is certainly relevant. Varro quotes Plautus explicitly as a linguistic source, usually for made-up, inventive vocabulary (*ut ait Plautus,* 522 Astbury). In the satire *Agatho*, set at a symposium, a servant is addressed in iambic senarii: *quid tristiorem uideo te esse quam antidhac, / Lampadio? numquid familiaris filius / amat, nec spes est auxili argentaria, / ideoque scapulae metuunt uirgidemiam?* "Why do I see you so much sadder than you were wont to be, Lampadio? Is it that the young gentleman is in love, with no hope of finding help in money, and therefore your shoulders fear a harvest of flogs?" Here, an explicit allusion to Plautus is the final word *uirgidemia*. It is an invented compound from *uirga* "rod" and (*uin*)*demia* "vintage," a one-off verbal coinage found in Plautus, *Rudens* 636 *tibi ulmeam ni deesse speres virgidemiam* "may you never fail to receive a harvest of elm-tree bruises," where the comic slave's expectation of beatings for misbehavior humorously becomes his staple, something he prays for to live up to his comic role.[8]

Unmistakable adaptations of Plautine language are recognizable also in fr. 133–134 Astbury (from the *Eumenides*), where a spoiled young gentleman, who was probably cured of his bad temper at the end (hence *Eumenides*), shouts at one of his servants,

[8] Another possible allusion to Plautine language is *spes auxili argentaria*, literally "silvery hope of help." The facetious misuse of the adjective also appears in *auxilium argentarium* in *Pseudolus* 105 and *inopia argentaria* in *Pseudolus* 300, both at line end.

perhaps his teacher, and even administers him a beating in the course of the scene: *quin mihi caperratam tuam frontem, Strobile, omittis?* "why don't you take away that frown of yours, Strobilus?" With *caperrata,* compare Plautus, *Epidicus* 609: *quid illud est quod illi caperrat frons severitudine*? "what is the reason that his brow is wrinkled from severity?" and 133 *apage in dierectum a domo nostra istam insanitatem,* "take this madness away from our house, to hell with you," where the adverbial *in dierectum* occurs only in Plautus, although typically in the form *i* (or *abi*) *dierecte* (e.g., *Mostellaria* 8).

A prose extract from *Menippeans* fr. 385 Astbury ushers us into a different aspect of the reception of Plautus, one in which comparison within the Roman comic tradition is the means of judgment and aesthetic evaluation: 399 Astbury *in quibus partibus, in argumentis Caecilius poscit palmam, in ethesin Terentius, in sermonibus Plautus* "for what regards the elements (of comedy), Caecilius comes first in writing plots, Terence in characters, Plautus in style."[9] The passage suggests that there were discussions about the literary accomplishments of early Roman comic writers, and these discussions centered on the three critical categories of language (choice of words), characterization, and plot structure. The fragment adumbrates a criticism against Plautus in some quarters, and seems to suggest that even Varro's endorsement of Plautus was not unrestricted. These standards of judgment were modeled on Greek New Comedy, and it may be argued that they were inadequate for a proper aesthetic appreciation of Plautus—yet even Varro, to all appearances, did not bring up new criteria to assess Plautus.

At least in terms of language and style, Plautus's prestige was rarely challenged. One generation before Varro, recognition for Plautus's style had been expressed in a famously eloquent dictum by the grammarian Aelius Stilo, according to whom "if the Muses had spoken Latin, they would have spoken the language of Plautus" (*apud* Quintilian, *Institutio oratoria* 10.1.99).

The works of Cicero mark a different stage of the reception of Plautus in the next century and a half. In Cicero, Plautus, with only five quotations, is vastly outnumbered by quotations of Terence (Deufert 2002: 151–158). In addition, four of the quotes are from *Trinummus,* one of the plays more suitable for education. For Cicero, Plautus is a paradigm of good, old-fashioned Latin—one step further from admiration as a creative, influential writer. In *De oratore* 3.45, the leading character of the dialogue, Crassus, describes his mother-in-law's more conservative manner of speaking as something that reminds him of Plautus. In this passage of Cicero, Plautus is synonymous with upper-class as well as highly educated diction (in particular, he is opposing urban to rustic and nonnative linguistic usage)—not the most immediate connection for a modern reader of Plautus, and presumably this has to do with the above-mentioned process of canonization of Plautus's works into literary (book) form. In the passage, Cicero is probably paying lip service to received critical opinion about Plautus's excellence in

[9] There is some controversy in the translation of *sermonibus*, which used to be taken to allude to lively dialogue rather than specifically to "style." In fact, this is much too specific: study of ancient critical vocabulary shows that style means primarily lexical choice (Jocelyn 1995: 241).

language. By his time, Plautine comedy was cultural heritage rather than pure entertainment. The compliment is echoed much later by Pliny the Younger, where letters written by a friend's young wife are compared to Plautus or Terence without the meter (cf. Plin. *Epist.* 1.16.6: *legit mihi nuper epistulas; uxoris esse dicebat: Plautum uel Terentium metro solutum legi credidi*).

A more peculiar, though interesting, comment on Plautus is preserved in Cicero *De officiis* 1.29. In it, two sorts of humor are enumerated, "the one, coarse, rude, vicious, indecent; the other, refined, polite, clever, witty," and Plautus is placed on a level with Greek New Comedy and Plato's dialogues as an example of the latter sort (no examples are provided for the former). The Greek examples probably come from a Greek source, with Plautus thrown in to add Roman color. We see in Cicero the two main high points of Plautus for the later tradition, his skill in making *ioci* and the elegance of his vocabulary.

Sometime at the beginning of the Augustan period, a radical break occurs in school practice. Teachers of grammar and rhetoric and schoolmasters begin to use near-contemporary literature in the educational curriculum, ousting the ancients. In fact, use of Plautus as a school author used for practicing correct word-division, punctuation, reading aloud, analysis of grammar and rhetorical figures, and so on, as we know was done for Vergil and Terence, may never have been extensive. However, the new interest in modern writers, such as Vergil, seems to lie behind the harsher evaluation of early drama expressed by critics of the Augustan and early imperial period, for example Quintilian, *Institutio oratoria* 10.1.99: *in comoedia maxime claudicamus* ("in comedy we are very deficient").

The new trend is clearly reflected in Horace's damning judgment of Plautus in the *Epistle to Augustus,* written probably around the year 12 BCE (*Epistulae* 2. 1.170–174):

> adspice, Plautus
> quo pacto partis tutetur amantis ephebi,
> ut patris attenti, lenonis ut insidiosi,
> quantus sit Dossennus edacibus in parasitis,
> quam non adstricto percurrat pulpita socco.
> Look at how badly[10] Plautus handles
> a youthful lover's part, or a tight-fisted father,
> or treacherous pimp, what a Dossennus he makes,
> sly villain, amongst his gluttonous parasites,
> how slipshod he is in sliding about the stage.
> (tr. Kline)

In this passage of Horace, Plautus himself, keen to make easy money (175–176), walks the stage taking up farcical roles (Dossennus was a fixed type in *Atellana,* buffoonish or cartoonish rather than a character proper)—a criticism against Plautus's contamination of

[10] I take the phrase *partis tutetur* as ironic, hence the need for "badly" in the translation.

new comedy realism with the more surreal tradition of Roman farce, which in Horace's view was a debasement of the Greek tradition. Horace's criticism of Plautus centers mainly on Plautus's failure to maintain the (ultimately social) distinction between the dramatic roles of young lovers, strict fathers, pimps, and servants. In spite of the graphic, highly effective language in which this judgment is couched, Horace's opinion is not original in the context of ancient criticism. Donatus, for example, constantly praises Terence for maintaining distinctions (*seruare*) between *honestiores* and *humiliores,* between *liberale* "what is proper for free individuals" and *seruile*. In Donatus's comment *in Ter. Ad.* 986, the foil against which praise of Terence is outlined is Plautus. According to Donatus, Demea, though forced to accept the failure of his educational plan, maintains his dignity when he lays bare the compromises of his brother's leniency—he is different from the earlier Demea, but not so inconsistent with himself "as the character of Truculentus in Plautus": *bene in postremo dignitas personae huius seruata est, ne perpetuo commutata uideretur, ut Truculenti apud Plautum*. Donatus has in mind the rustic servant in *Truculentus*, who undergoes a complete change of attitude in the play, from uncouth misogynist to victim of the courtesans' charms.

For the early imperial period, the use of Plautus in the schoolroom is suggested (Deufert 2002: 177) by an interesting fragment that refers to Annaeus Cornutus, the teacher of the satirist Persius, who lived in the Neronian period. The passage was transmitted by the grammatical writer Charisius, active in the second half of the fourth century: Charisius, *Ars* 261.17 Barwick: *in mundo pro palam et in expedito ac cito: Plautus in Pseudulo* (500) *"quia sciebam," inquit, "pistrinum in mundo fore" ut Annaeus Cornutus libro tabularum ceratarum patris sui*, "The expression *in mundo* means 'openly' and 'quickly', or 'soon', as Plautus says in *Pseudolus*, (500), 'as I knew punishment in the mill was soon to come to me', as Annaeus Cornutus explains in the *Father's Wax-tablets*." Commentaries, or more probably exegetical writings, did exist in the republican period.[11]

4. Phase III: Second Century CE: Revival

The critical fortunes of Plautus thereafter seem to have been at their lowest until the Antonine period (II century CE), when there was a revival of early Roman literature. In the figure of Apuleius, this so-called archaizing movement coincided with one of the most significant phases of the creative reception of Plautus in antiquity (see May in this volume). The archaizing movement in fact developed a trend never absent from

[11] In late antiquity, there are traces of school use of Plautus, but such use was probably limited to a few very selective schools, like Donatus's, where Jerome studied. Commentaries on Plautus are mentioned in Jerome, *Apologia, PL* Migne 23.410B. One of these was the work of the otherwise unknown Sisenna (Deufert 2002: 245–256), active in the third century. Interestingly, this work contained many interpretations of metrical and prosodic phenomena, a rarity for this later period.

Latin, the love for solemn obsolete language, for example in epic poetry and historical writers and in some orators. In this context, Fronto, *Epistulae ad Caes.* 4.3.2, includes Plautus in a catalogue of Roman early writers committed to the "peril of seeking out words with excessive diligence" (*periculum uerba industriosius quaerendi*); he opposed him to Cicero, whom Front saw as an author less devoted to such concentration over language. It is almost certainly in this context that a new critical edition of twenty-one plays of Plautus (the so-called Hadrianic edition) was put together, one in which for the first time the plays were divided into separate episodes called "scenes." This selection went back to Varro's own canon of the authentic Plautine plays, and it is responsible for the survival of Plautus into the Middle Ages.

add "o", ie "Fronto"

5. Phase IV: Late Reception

Second-century authors of the second sophistic, namely Gellius and Fronto, were fundamental in elevating Plautus to the status of a recognized linguistic authority in the works of later lexicographers (especially Nonius Marcellus, ca. 400 CE) and other grammatical writers. So, for example, at the end of the fourth century, Servius's commentary of Vergil largely resorts to Plautus to defend the use of archaic language in Vergil, and even goes so far as to argue, without much regard for genre or register expectations, that Plautus is the source of a passage in the *Aeneid* (Serv. *In Verg. Aen.* 6.62). Close in time to Servius, Macrobius mentions Plautus in his *Saturnalia* as one of the two most eloquent ancient Latin writers, on a par with Cicero (Macr. *Saturnalia* 2.1.10 *duos quos eloquentissimos antiqua aetas tulit, comicum Plautum et oratorem Tullium*).

The school tradition, however, remains firmly dominated by Terence and the particular type of dramatic illusion his works promoted. In the treatise *On Comedy* by the grammarian Evanthius (Cupaiuolo 1992), active in the first half of the fourth century and perhaps author of a commentary on Terence antedating Donatus, Plautus is viewed only against the model of Terentian dramatic qualities: his work suffers from stylistic disunity (presumably a reference to Plautus's paratragic and parodic sections), is replete with obscurities (because of allusions to customs and topic events in need of explanation, for later generations, by the *historici*), and frequently *facit actorem uelut extra comoediam loqui* ("shows actors breaking the dramatic illusion"), which Terence does not allow and which, in Evanthius's view of comedy, is a flaw.

Little pagan or profane literature survives after Apuleius, and therefore the reception of Plautus is harder to follow for the later periods, except in grammatical writers.

Among Christian writers, Jerome is the only one who seems to have had an extensive knowledge of Plautus, commonly attributed to his school years at Donatus's school in Rome. Jerome mentions Plautus several times, for example in his list of translators aiming at correct idiom in translation from a foreign language (in his letter 57, to Pammachius, also known as *De optimo genere interpretandi*). Jerome uses Plautus as a source of sarcastic allusion, especially in his polemical writings, for example in *Aduersus*

Iouinianum 1.1. Here he describes the contortion of Jovinian's argument with the words *has quidem praeter Sibyllam leget nemo*, paraphrasing *Pseudolus* 23–24, *has quidem pol credo nisi Sibylla legerit / interpretari alium posse neminem* ("I don't think anyone but the Sibyl will be able to decipher this letter"). In Minucius's *Octavius,* the expression *homo Plautinae prosapiae* is synonymous with buffoon or charlatan. Decimus Ausonius, a court notable, imitates and adapts Plautus in the *Ludus septem sapientum*, written in 390, in iambic senarii exhibiting a fairly expert understanding of Plautine metrics.

A little-known chapter in the history of Plautus reception in antiquity is the play *Querolus siue Aulularia,* probably written in fifth-century Gaul. It is not known whether the play was intended for reading or for performance. *Querolus* ("The grumpy man") is written in prose imitating the iambic and trochaic rhythms of *palliata.* The play takes its name from the title figure, who is the son of Plautus's miser Euclio in *Aulularia*. When the play begins, Querolus has received news of his father's death while abroad. He is upset, though mainly at the thought that his father has left him penniless. The wheeler-dealer Mandrogerus, presented in the play as a "parasite" though he claims to be an astrologer and a magician, knows that Euclio has left his son a treasure in a pot kept inside the house, and manages to obtain it from Querolus through a stratagem. However, when he finally opens the pot, Mandrogerus finds only a funerary urn in it. In a fit of anger and spite, he throws the urn through a window into Querolus's house. The urn breaks apart and reveals a treasure inside, to the great joy of Querolus, who is thus cured of his bad temper.

Querolus is a middle-class malcontent in search of his way in life. The initial dialogue with *Lar familiaris,* another character taken from Plautus's *Aulularia*, is the occasion of much satire against various contemporary professions, especially lawyers. Plautus's *Aulularia* provides a rough background and the odd turn, especially short answers and greetings, but the main character is very different from the original Euclio, and nothing of the more subversive elements of Plautus has survived. Querolus's slave Pantomalus takes no initiatives, and in fact only appears briefly to fill in details of the psychological profile of the grumpy protagonist. The old *Aulularia* has been turned into a neat morality play, in which a young man of neither shining intellect nor flawless character is helped by a friendly deity to a little fortune which also makes his temper less sour in the end. Curiously, the author's initial declaration to be writing "in Plautus' footsteps" seems to echo the "revival" prologue to *Casina* (see p. ~~ooo):~~ *Aululariam hodie sumus acturi, non ueterem at rudem* "we are going to put up today *Aulularia*, not the old but a new one," yet memory of Plautus is watered down by school reminiscences of all the major classics, down to Cicero's *o tempora o mores*.

"768):"

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